

Subpart A—What is the Family and Medical Leave Act, and to Whom Does It Apply?

§ 825.100 What is the Family and Medical Leave Act?

(a) The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA or Act) allows “eligible” employees of a covered employer to take job-protected, unpaid leave, or to substitute appropriate paid leave if the employee has earned or accrued it, for up to a total of 12 workweeks in any 12 months because of the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child, because of the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care, because the employee is needed to care for a family member (child, spouse, or parent) with a serious health condition, or because the employee’s own serious health condition makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his or her job (see § 825.306(b)(4)). In certain cases, this leave may be taken on an intermittent basis rather than all at once, or the employee may work a part-time schedule.

(b) An employee on FMLA leave is also entitled to have health benefits maintained while on leave as if the employee had continued to work instead of taking the leave. If an employee was paying all or part of the premium payments prior to leave, the employee would continue to pay his or her share during the leave period. The employer may recover its share only if the employee does not return to work for a reason other than the serious health condition of the employee or the employee’s immediate family member, or another reason beyond the employee’s control.

(c) An employee generally has a right to return to the same position or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and working conditions at the conclusion of the leave. The taking of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any benefit that accrued prior to the start of the leave.

(d) The employer has a right to 30 days advance notice from the employee where practicable. In addition, the employer may require an employee to submit certification from a health care provider to substantiate that the leave

is due to the serious health condition of the employee or the employee’s immediate family member. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in a delay in the start of FMLA leave. Pursuant to a uniformly applied policy, the employer may also require that an employee present a certification of fitness to return to work when the absence was caused by the employee’s serious health condition (see § 825.311(c)). The employer may delay restoring the employee to employment without such certificate relating to the health condition which caused the employee’s absence.

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§ 825.101 What is the purpose of the Act?

(a) FMLA is intended to allow employees to balance their work and family life by taking reasonable unpaid leave for medical reasons, for the birth or adoption of a child, and for the care of a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition. The Act is intended to balance the demands of the workplace with the needs of families, to promote the stability and economic security of families, and to promote national interests in preserving family integrity. It was intended that the Act accomplish these purposes in a manner that accommodates the legitimate interests of employers, and in a manner consistent with the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment in minimizing the potential for employment discrimination on the basis of sex, while promoting equal employment opportunity for men and women.

(b) The enactment of FMLA was predicated on two fundamental concerns—the needs of the American workforce, and the development of high-performance organizations. Increasingly, America’s children and elderly are dependent upon family members who must spend long hours at work. When a family emergency arises, requiring workers to attend to seriously-ill children or parents, or to newly-born or adopted infants, or even to their own serious illness, workers need reassurance that they will not be asked to choose between continuing their employment, and meeting their

personal and family obligations or tending to vital needs at home.

(c) The FMLA is both intended and expected to benefit employers as well as their employees. A direct correlation exists between stability in the family and productivity in the workplace. FMLA will encourage the development of high-performance organizations. When workers can count on durable links to their workplace they are able to make their own full commitments to their jobs. The record of hearings on family and medical leave indicate the powerful productive advantages of stable workplace relationships, and the comparatively small costs of guaranteeing that those relationships will not be dissolved while workers attend to pressing family health obligations or their own serious illness.

§ 825.102 When was the Act effective?

(a) The Act became effective on August 5, 1993, for most employers. If a collective bargaining agreement was in effect on that date, the Act's effective date was delayed until February 5, 1994, or the date the agreement expired, whichever date occurred sooner. This delayed effective date was applicable only to employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement that was in effect on August 5, 1993, and not, for example, to employees outside the bargaining unit. Application of FMLA to collective bargaining agreements is discussed further in § 825.700(c).

(b) The period prior to the Act's effective date must be considered in determining employer coverage and employee eligibility. For example, as discussed further below, an employer with no collective bargaining agreements in effect as of August 5, 1993, must count employees/workweeks for calendar year 1992 and calendar year 1993. If 50 or more employees were employed during 20 or more workweeks in *either* 1992 or 1993 (through August 5, 1993), the employer was covered under FMLA on August 5, 1993. If not, the employer was not covered on August 5, 1993, but must continue to monitor employment levels each workweek remaining in 1993 and thereafter to determine if and when it might become covered.

§ 825.103 How did the Act affect leave in progress on, or taken before, the effective date of the Act?

(a) An eligible employee's right to take FMLA leave began on the date that the Act went into effect for the employer (*see* the discussion of differing effective dates for collective bargaining agreements in §§ 825.102(a) and 825.700(c)). Any leave taken prior to the Act's effective date may not be counted for purposes of FMLA. If leave qualifying as FMLA leave was underway prior to the effective date of the Act and continued after the Act's effective date, only that portion of leave taken on or after the Act's effective date may be counted against the employee's leave entitlement under the FMLA.

(b) If an employer-approved leave was underway when the Act took effect, no further notice would be required of the employee unless the employee requested an extension of the leave. For leave which commenced on the effective date or shortly thereafter, such notice must have been given which was practicable, considering the foreseeability of the need for leave and the effective date of the statute.

(c) Starting on the Act's effective date, an employee is entitled to FMLA leave if the reason for the leave is qualifying under the Act, even if the event occasioning the need for leave (e.g., the birth of a child) occurred before the effective date (so long as any other requirements are satisfied).

§ 825.104 What employers are covered by the Act?

(a) An employer covered by FMLA is any person engaged in commerce or in any industry or activity affecting commerce, who employs 50 or more employees for each working day during each of 20 or more calendar workweeks in the current or preceding calendar year. Employers covered by FMLA also include any person acting, directly or indirectly, in the interest of a covered employer to any of the employees of the employer, any successor in interest of a covered employer, and any public agency. Public agencies are covered employers without regard to the number of employees employed. Public as